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October 29, 2012

Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary
The State Department
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Honorable Leon Panetta
Secretary
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretaries Clinton and Panetta:

It has been 48 days since the September 11, 2012, terrorist attack on our U.S. consulate and the CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya. It is unacceptable that you have yet to provide a clear accounting of the events and decisions that led to the brutal murders of four brave Americans.

I appreciate the ongoing investigation that the Administration initiated, but I am concerned by the continued shifting stories, seemingly daily new revelations, and utter lack of urgency shown by you and others within this Administration. The American public was first told it was a spontaneous attack caused by protesters enraged by an online video. Then, we learned this was no protest, and it was indeed a malicious terrorist attack.

Later, the revelation surfaced that the U.S. Ambassador to Libya had requested additional security on multiple occasions prior to the attack -- all of which were denied. I continue to be concerned about reports of the limited access our U.S. investigators have had to the attack site. Instead of learning these facts from the Administration, the American people have unfortunately learned of these inconsistencies and failures through investigative news reports.

Recent reports that multiple requests for assistance during the attack were denied are appropriately alarming Americans and must be addressed. Secretary Panetta, you said on October 25, 2012, that the situation on the ground was too confusing and that, "You don't deploy forces into harm's way without knowing what's going on; without having some real-time information..." This assertion is difficult for the American people to accept in light of reports that drones were delivering real-time video of the situation and intelligence personnel were not only requesting help, but providing information to guide a precise counterattack.

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It is entirely inappropriate for you to label the questions being asked as Monday morning quarterbacking until you have provided a full and complete accounting of the information available throughout the attack and the reasons behind the decisions made.

If it is true that requests for help during the attack were denied, such denials would be outrageous and inexcusable. American blood was shed at the hands of terrorists. Brave men who dedicated themselves to service and believed their country would stand behind them were left unprotected and brutally murdered. Americans deserve truthful, timely and complete answers. The families of these American heroes deserve answers. We were promised by the President that he and his Administration would be "straight with the American people." It is time to stop hiding behind the shield of an ongoing investigation and to provide the facts in a transparent manner.

I ask that you provide a complete time line of the events, decisions and persons involved in those decisions leading up to and throughout the attacks on the U.S. consulate and CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012. You have had 48 days to ascertain the facts. There should be no further delay. Many Americans suspect a full accounting of the facts will be delayed until the election is over and this Administration would be very well served to prove them wrong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns", is written in a cursive style.

Mike Johanns
United States Senator